



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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DDA offers advice on home use pesticides

Last week, we experienced the worst winter weather of the year, but the advent of Day Light Savings Time this past weekend signals that spring is right around the corner. With spring comes lawn care, gardening, and vexing “bugs” inside and out. Many consumers will turn to pesticides as tools for getting lawns and gardens in shape and managing pests.

The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) wants to make sure pesticides are being applied in a safe manner. Dave Pyne, DDA Pesticide Section administrator, said, “DDA works very hard to protect the public by requiring that all commercial pesticide applicators pass a test and become certified by the DDA to prove that they know how to use pesticides properly. However, homeowners and apartment dwellers do not have to be certified to use pesticides in and around their homes even though insecticides, weed killers, slug baits, etc. found on retail shelves contain the same active ingredients used by commercial applicators.”

Following are some tips that can be used by individuals as to safely control these pests. The first step is to be sure that a pesticide is needed, i.e., identify the problem and determine if a pesticide is the only solution. To solve the problem, the pest in question has to be identified. If the pest is unknown, check with a reliable dealer, county extension offices, the DDA Plant Industries Section, libraries, etc. Then, and only then, should a pesticide even be considered. If a pesticide is needed, purchase a product that is specifically for the identified pest. To determine which pesticide fits the problem, **READ PRODUCT LABELS** – there is no such thing as “One product controls all.”

The product label has a wealth of information – usage guidelines and safety precautions – and should be read over and over and over again. **Read it** before you buy it. **Read it** before you use it. **Read it** before you store it. **Read it** before you dispose of it.

Buy and use only the amount needed. Pesticides do not store well. This is one situation where more is definitely not better. You do not need to buy in bulk because you really do not want to store pesticides in your garage or your home for the next year.

Usage precautions:

- Keep children and pets away from the area during and right after the application of the product. The label will explain how long to wait before it is safe for them to return to the area.
- If mixing or dilution of the product is required, safe handling methods will be outlined on the label. Follow them. For example, wear gloves if the label says to; wear eye protection if the label says to, etc. This information is there for your protection.
- Open the container in a well-ventilated area or outdoors.
- Never eat, drink, or smoke while using pesticides.

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- When treating food plants and gardens, observe the time-to-harvest waiting period on the label.
- If you live in close proximity to others, be a good neighbor, and let others know what you are using and when you are using it.
- Time of day, temperature, moisture conditions, and wind conditions should also be considered if noted on the label. For example, windy conditions increase pesticide drift. Some times of day may be more advantageous to protecting beneficial insects such as honeybees and butterflies.
- Spilled pesticide should be cleaned up immediately according to the directions on the label.

Once the application is finished, it is time to **clean-up and take care of any unused portion** of the product.

- If you decide to store leftover material, secure it in a cool dry place where children and pets cannot find it.
- Never store it in food or drink containers.
- Do not remove it from its original container, which has that all important label.
- Do not store pesticides near wells.
- Buying only the needed amount will greatly reduce any disposal problems.
- Don't throw leftovers in your household garbage. Dispose of left over pesticide and pesticide containers according to the instructions on the label and local and state laws.
- **If you have any questions regarding disposal, contact the DDA Pesticides section at (800) 282-8685 (DE only) or (302) 698-4500.**
- **The Delaware Solid Waste Authority has hazardous waste collection days each year during which residents can dispose of waste pesticide and pesticide containers. For more information on the dates and time, call the Delaware Solid Waste Authority at 1-800-404-7080 or check the website:**
<http://www.dswa.com/> .
- Thoroughly clean the equipment used – hose, sprayer, wand, etc., to prevent future problems that might result from residual product.
- Shower and shampoo thoroughly after using pesticides.
- Wash contaminated clothing separately from the family laundry.

In summary, pesticides are important, useful tools when used properly. They can be easily purchased in many places such as garden shops, supermarkets, and department stores. They are safe to use as long as you **READ THE LABEL and FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS -- ALL OF THE INSTRUCTIONS.** If you think this is too much trouble, the best advice is to either not use pesticides or to call a professional, licensed pest control company.

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